

Message Text

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INR/RSG - MR. MEYERS (DRAFT)

S/PRS - MR. PERNICK

OSD/ISA - CDR. TALBERT

OSD/ISA/PP - COL. LEIDER

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R 152258Z FEB 74

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

USINT CAIRO

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

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AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMEMBASSY SANAA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USLO PEKING
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
CINCPAC
CINCEUR
CINCUSNAVEUR
CINCLANT

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SUBJECT: SOVIET NAVAL ACTIVITY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

REF: CANBERRA 775 (NOTAL)

1. IN RESPONSE TO REFTEL AND IN ANTICIPATION OF FURTHER
QUESTIONS REGARDING THE EXTENT OF SOVIET NAVAL OPERATIONS
IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AS IT RELATED TO OUR RATIONALE FOR AN
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INCREASED U.S. NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE AREA AND EXPANSION OF
FACILITIES ON DIEGO GARCIA, ADDRESSEES MAY DRAW UPON THE
FOLLOWING UNCLASSIFIED INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE:

THE USSR HAS MAINTAINED AN ALMOST CONTINUOUS NAVAL
PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN SINCE MARCH 1968. DURING
THIS PERIOD THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL DEPLOYMENTS OF MAJOR
SOVIET SURFACE GROUPS GENERALLY CONSISTING OF A CRUISER

AND A DESTROYER, AN AMPHIBIOUS SHIP, AN OILER, AND VARIOUS SUPPORT SHIPS. BETWEEN THESE MAJOR DEPLOYMENTS, THE SOVIETS HAVE MAINTAINED A DESTROYER AND VARIOUS SUPPORT SHIPS AND SOMETIMES AN ATTACK SUBMARINE IN THE AREA. SOVIET SUBMARINES BEGAN OPERATIONS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN IN NOVEMBER 1968, AND THE PRESENCE OF SUBMARINES HAS BECOME VIRTUALLY CONTINUOUS SINCE 1971.

THE SOVIET FORCE AVERAGED ABOUT 12 SHIPS THROUGH THE FALL OF 1971. DURING AND AFTER THE INDO/PAKISTAN WAR THE NUMBER INCREASED BY ABOUT 25 PERCENT, EXCLUDING UNITS WHICH WERE DEPLOYED TO BANGLADESH FOR PORT CLEARING OPERATIONS. DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, SOVIET FLEET STRENGTH IN THE INDIAN OCEAN HAS AVERAGED 16 SHIPS. OF COURSE, PRIOR TO THE HANCOCK DEPLOYMENT LAST FALL, THE ONLY PERMANENT U.S. NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE AREA CONSISTED OF THE MIDEASTFORCE FLAGSHIP AND TWO ROTATIONALLY DEPLOYED DESTROYER TYPE SHIPS. IN 1973 TOTAL SOVIET SHIP DAYS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN EXCEEDED THOSE OF THE U.S. NAVY BY A RATIO OF MORE THAN 4 TO 1.

THE EXTENSION OF SOVIET NAVAL OPERATIONS INTO THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA HAS PROVIDED THE USSR WITH A USEFUL TOOL TO SUPPORT SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS. ADDITIONALLY, SOVIET SHIPS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA ARE EMPLOYED TO SUPPORT SOVIET SPACE AND OCEANOGRAPHIC OPERATIONS, AND TO TEST SHIPS AND SUBMARINES IN A TROPICAL ENVIRONMENT. SOVIET ACCESS TO VARIOUS FACILITIES IN SOMALIA AND THE PDRY SUPPORTS THESE INDIAN OCEAN DEPLOYMENTS. FOR EXAMPLE, REGULAR USE IS BEING MADE OF BERBERA IN SOMALIA FOR MAINTENANCE, LOGISTIC SUPPORT, AND THEY HAVE SHORE ACCOMMODATIONS AND A REPAIR SHIP TO COMPLEMENT THESE FACILITIES. IN ADDITION TO THESE SOVIET

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NAVAL FORCES IN THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN AREA, THE SOVIET NAVAL HARBOR CLEARING GROUP SENT TO BANGLADESH AFTER THE 1971 INDO/PAKISTAN WAR IS STILL THERE. A SOMEWHAT INCREASED LEVEL OF SOVIET NAVAL AND MERCHANT MARINE ACTIVITY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN COULD RESULT IF AND WHEN THE SUEZ CANAL IS REOPENED AND THE MOST DIRECT TRANSIT ROUTE BETWEEN EUROPEAN RUSSIA AND THE SOVIET FAR EAST VIA THE INDIAN OCEAN IS REESTABLISHED. WE THEREFORE THINK IT NECESSARY TO IMPROVE OUR LOGISTIC SUPPORT FACILITIES TO ENABLE U.S. NAVAL FORCES TO OPERATE WITH ADEQUATE MOBILITY IN THE AREA. IN OUR VIEW, AN EFFECTIVE U.S. COUNTERBALANCE TO SOVIET NAVAL FORCES IN THE AREA WILL BE POLITICALLY STABILIZING AND REASSURING TO OUR ALLIES AND FRIENDS. RUSH

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